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By *ADAM FITZ-ADAM.*

To be continued every THURSDAY.

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I HAVE hinted more than once in the courſe of theſe papers, that the preſent age, notwithſtanding the vices and follies with which it abounds, has the happineſs of ſtanding as high in my opinion as any age whatſoever. But it has always been the faſhion to believe, that from the beginning of the world to the preſent day, men have been encreaſing in wickedneſs: and though

though we have the bible to turn to, which gives us the hiſtory of mankind before the flood, and of the Jews after it, we have ſtill the humility to retain this opinion, and to lament the amazing degeneracy of the preſent times. But the eye of a philoſopher can penetrate into this falſe humility, and diſcover it to be mere peeviſhneſs and diſcontent. The preſent times, like our wives and our other poſſeſſions, are OUR OWN, and therefore we have no reliſh of them.

MANY of my readers may poſſibly object to theſe encomiums on the times, imagining they may tend to make men ſatisfied with what they are, inſtead of inciting them to become what they ought to be. But it was always my opinion (and I believe it to be univerſally true) that men are more likely to be PRAISED into virtue, than to be RAILED out of vice. It is a maxim in everybody's mouth, that reputation once loſt, is never to be recovered. He therefore to whom you give an ill name, will have little or no encouragement to endeavour at a good one, as knowing that if a character of infamy is once fixed, no change of behaviour can have power to redeem it. On the contrary, the man to whom you give a good name, though he ſhould have merited a bad one, will find in his commerce with the world the advantages of ſuch a name, and from conviction of thoſe advantages, will be ſo ſolicitous to deſerve it, as to become in reality the good man you have called him. People may reaſon away the merit of ſuch a perſon's behaviour if they pleaſe, by aſcribing it ſolely to ſelf-love; they may add too, if they chuſe (and they have my hearty leave) that all virtue whatſoever has it's ſource in that paſſion: if this

this be true (though the revealers of ſuch truths cannot be complimented on their intention to promote virtue) can there be a ſtronger argument for goodneſs, than that it is neceſſary to our happineſs? It is ſaid of that ſagacious inſect, the bee, that he extracts honey from poiſon: and a mind, rightly turned, may draw inſtruction even from theſe gentlemen. But to return to my ſubject.

If people, when they are railing againſt the preſent times, inſtead of aſſerting in the groſs that they are more wicked than the paſt, would content themſelves with pointing out what are really the vices that have gathered head amongſt us; if, for inſtance, they were to ſay that luxury and gaming are at preſent at a much higher pitch than formerly, I ſhould be far from contradicting them. Theſe are indeed the vices of the times: but for the firſt of them, I am afraid we muſt content ourſelves with complaints, inſtead of offering at a remedy: for as luxury is always owing to too much wealth, Providence in it's wiſdom has ſo ordered it, that in due courſe of time it will deſtroy itſelf. The cure therefore of luxury is poverty; a remedy, which though we do not care to preſcribe to ourſelves, we are preparing at great pains and expence for thoſe that are to come after us. Of gaming I ſhall only obſerve, that, like luxury, it will in time work out it's own cure; and at the rate it goes on at preſent, one ſhould imagine that it cannot laſt long.

I know but of one evil more that ſeems to have gathered any degree of ſtrength in theſe times, and that is corruption: for as to extravagance and a love of pleaſure, I include them in the article of luxury. And perhaps

haps the evil of corruption, as it is now practiced, may admit of palliation: for though it has been aſſerted by certain writers upon ethics, that it is unlawful to do evil that good may enſue, yet ſomething may be ſaid in favour of a candidate for a ſeat in parliament, who if he ſhould be tempted to commit the ſmall evil of bribing a borough or a few particulars in a county, it is, no doubt, in order to effect ſo great a good as the preſervation of the liberty, the property, the happineſs, the virtue, and the religion of a whole nation.

As to all other vices, I believe they will be found to exiſt amongſt us pretty much in the ſame degree as heretofore, forms only changing. Our grandfathers uſed to get drunk with ſtrong beer and port; we get drunk with claret and champagne. They would lie abominably to conceal their wenching; we lie as abominably in boaſting of ours. They ſtole ſlyly in at the back-door of a bagnio; we march in boldly at the fore-door, and immediately ſteal out ſlyly at the back-door. Our mothers were prudes; their daughters are coquetts. The firſt dreſſed like modeſt women, and perhaps were wantons; the laſt dreſs like women of the town, and perhaps are virtuous. Thoſe treated without hanging out a ſign; theſe hang out the ſign without intending to treat. To be ſtill more particular, the abuſe of power, the views of patriots, the flattery of dependants, and the promiſes of great men, are I believe pretty much the ſame now as in former ages. Vices that we have no reliſh for, we part with for thoſe we like; giving up avarice for prodigality, hypocriſy for profligacy, and lewdneſs for play.

BUT as I have inſtanced in this eſſay the particular vices of the times, it would be doing them injuſtice if I neglected to obſerve, that humanity, charity and the civilities of life never abounded ſo much as now. I muſt alſo repeat, what has already been taken notice of in theſe papers, that our virtues receive a luſtre, and our vices a ſoftening, by manners and decorum.

THERE is a folly, indeed (for I will not call it a vice) with which the ladies of this age are particularly charged: it is, that not only their airs and their dreſs, but even their faces are French. I wiſh with all my heart that I could preſerve my integrity, and vindicate my fair country women from this imputation: but I am ſorry to ſay it, what by travelling abroad, and by French milleners, mantua-makers and hair-cutters at home, our politeſt aſſemblies ſeem to be filled with foreigners. But how will it aſtoniſh many of my readers to be told, that while they are extolling the days of good queen BESS, they are complimenting that very reign in which theſe faſhions were originally introduced! But becauſe in a matter of ſo much conſequence no man's bare word ſhould be taken, I ſhall make good my aſſertion by publiſhing an authentic letter, written by that ſubtil miniſter Sir William Cecil (afterwards lord Burleigh) to Sir Henry Norris, queen Elizabeth's ambaſſador at the court of France. This letter was originally printed in the year ſixteen hundred and ſixty three among a collection of ſtate letters called Scrinia Ceciliana, or Myſteries of Government, and is as follows.

" SIR,

" THE queen's majeſty would fain have a taylor that " had ſkill to make her apparel both after the French

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